

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 KABUL 08623 01 OF 02 271225Z  
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-14 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SMS-01 SES-01 /087 W  
-----099587 271230Z /10

O R 271101Z DEC 79  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6581  
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
AMEMBASSY BEIJING  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
USMISSION USNATO  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
CINCPAC  
CINCEUR

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 8623

CINCPAC AND CINCEUR ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12065: GDS 12/27/85 (TAYLOR, JAMES E.) OR-P/E  
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, PINS, US, AF, UR  
SUBJ: (LOU) SOVIET AIRLIFT COULD HAVE REPERCUSSIONS BEYOND  
AFGHAN BORDERS

REF: KABUL 8566

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT)
2. SUMMARY: THE UNPRECEDENTED CHRISTMAS AIRLIFT OF SOVIET  
COMBAT UNITS INTO KABUL UNDERSCORES THE QUALITATIVE CHANGE  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 KABUL 08623 01 OF 02 271225Z

IN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS HERE. THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THE  
SOVIET MOVE ARE CHILLING, BOTH AS REGARDS THE FUTURE OF  
AFGHANISTAN ITSELF AND THE REGION AS A WHOLE. INTERNALLY, WE  
MAY SOON SEE SOVIET DIVISIONS OPERATING SIDE BY SIDE WITH  
LOYAL DRA TROOPS TO SUPPRESS THE INSURGENCY -- DESPITE THE  
LIKELIHOOD OF WIDESPREAD GENOCIDE. EXTERNALLY, THE SUCCESS  
OF THE SOVIETS WILL HAVE AN UNSETTLING EFFECT ON THE REGION,

MORE LIKELY TO LEAD TO A GENERAL POSTURE OF ACCOMMODATION THAN OF DEFIANCE.

3. ON THE LOCAL SCENE, THE AIRLIFT IS LIKELY TO HAVE AS MUCH POLITICAL AS STRICTLY MILITARY OBJECTIVES. MOSCOW NOW HAS ITS OWN FORCES CLOSE TO THE POLITICAL HEART OF THE COUNTRY, THEREBY PERHAPS INSURING THAT IT WILL HAVE A LOUD VOICE SHOULD FURTHER INTERNAL TENSIONS TEAR THE KHALQIS' POLITICAL FABRIC.

4. ANY SEMBLANCE OF AFGHAN POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE HAS VIRTUALLY BEEN ELIMINATED BY THIS MASSIVE AIRLIFT, AND IT COULD WELL BE YEARS, IF EVER, BEFORE A COMMUNIST REVOLUTIONARY REGIME IS SUFFICIENTLY SECURE THAT SOVIET TROOPS CAN BE WITHDRAWN. REACTION OF THOSE AFGHANS WILLING TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS HAS BEEN ONE OF DESPAIR, AS THEY BELIEVE SOVIET TROOPS WILL NOW GUARANTEE THE SURVIVAL OF THE HATED AMIN REGIME. EVEN IF INACCURATE IN SOME RESPECTS, ONE AFGHAN MERCHANT SADLY CLAIMED THAT "AFGHANISTAN HAS NOW BECOME A SECOND CZECHOSLOVAKIA." END OF SUMMARY.

5. MASSIVE AIRLIFT UNDERSCORES THE QUALITATIVE CHANGE IN EVENTS THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE HERE. THE INJECTION OF SOVIET COMBAT FORCES INTO AFGHANISTAN TO PROP UP A REGIME THAT MAY NOT HAVE SURVIVED WITHOUT SUCH HELP, AND THE UNABASHEDLY PUBLIC MANNER IN WHICH THESE FORCES WERE DEPLOYED, UNDERSCORE THE DEPTH OF  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 KABUL 08623 01 OF 02 271225Z

THE QUALITATIVE CHANGE WHICH HAS OCCURRED. THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT HAS YET TO MENTION THE EVENT PUBLICLY, AND MOSCOW HAS ALSO REMAINED MUTE REGARDING THE DESPATCH OF PERHAPS TWO HUNDRED SOVIET AIR FORCE PLANES AND POSSIBLY THOUSANDS OF SOVIET COMBAT TROOPS TO A NEIGHBORING COUNTRY. WHETHER THE USSR WILL FORMALLY INVOKE THE "BREZHNEV DOCTRINE" TO JUSTIFY ITS ACTION REMAINS TO BE SEEN. IF SO, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO AVOID THE CONCLUSION THAT THE KHALQI REGIME IN KABUL IS CONSIDERED A FULL-FLEDGED MEMBER OF THE "SOCIALIST COMMUNITY OF STATES." ON THE OTHER HAND, THE TWO GOVERNMENTS MAY RELY ON THE DECEMBER 5, 1978, TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AS JUSTIFICATION FOR "COOPERATION" BETWEEN TWO SOVEREIGN STATES. THIS WOULD STRIKE US AS POTENTIALLY OMINOUS FOR OTHER COUNTRIES WITH SIMILAR TREATIES, SINCE MOSCOW HAS DECIDED TO SEND COMBAT FORCES TO A NON-WARSAW PACT COUNTRY AT THE REQUEST OF A CLEARLY UNPOPULAR COMMUNIST REGIME HANGING ON TO POWER BY ITS FINGERNAILS AND DEPENDENT PRINCIPALLY ON THE ZEAL OF A SMALL CADRE OF DEDICATED PARTY MEMBERS, AND THE LOYALTY OF A FEW KEY MILITARY UNITS IN AND AROUND THE CAPITAL.

6. THIS PARTICULAR PHASE OF SOVIET MILITARY ACTIVITY MAY NOW BE COMPLETED, AND IT IS UNKNOWN IF ADDITIONAL FORCES WILL BE

SENT TO KABUL OR TO OTHER AFGHAN CITIES OR MILITARY BASES.  
OUR GUESS IS THEY WILL. THE DIMENSIONS OF THE CHRISTMAS  
AIRLIFT TO KABUL, HOWEVER, ARE APPARENT TO ALL OBSERVERS HERE,  
AND IT IS NOW CLEAR EVEN TO THOSE WHO DOWNPLAYED THE IMPORTANCE  
OF THE THREE BATTALIONS OF SOVIET TROOPS AT BAGRAM AIR BASE  
THAT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS HAVE ENTERED A NEW PHASE WITH  
THE ARRIVAL OF SOVIET UNITS IN AFGHANISTAN'S CAPITAL. IN  
THIS CONTEXT, WE WOULD LIKE TO REEXAMINE THE ANALYSIS IN  
OUR REFTEL TO SET FORTH THE ADDED DIMENSIONS WHICH WE SEE  
FLOWING FROM RECENT EVENTS.

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 KABUL 08623 02 OF 02 271255Z

ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ADS-00 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SMS-01 SES-01 /087 W  
-----099690 271317Z /42

O R 271101Z DEC 79

FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6582

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BEIJING

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION USNATO

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC

CINCEUR

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 KABUL 8623

7. THE IMPACT OF THE AIRLIFT WILL IN TIME HAVE REPERCUSSIONS  
BEYOND AFGHANISTAN'S BORDERS. IN ADDITION TO THE EFFECT THESE  
EVENTS WILL HAVE WITHIN THIS COUNTRY, THERE IS SURE TO BE A  
MAJOR IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WELL  
BEYOND AFGHANISTAN'S BORDERS. IN THE WAKE OF HIGH-LEVEL  
EXPRESSIONS OF U.S. CONCERN AT THE ARRIVAL OF THE THREE  
BATTALIONS OF SOVIET TROOPS AT BAGRAM AIR BASE, THE MASSIVE  
AND BLATANT AIRLIFT TO KABUL STRIKES US AS A DISTINCT  
AND OVERT DISREGARD OF U.S. INTERESTS ON THE PART OF THE KREMLIN.

DESPITE WHATEVER "LEGALITY" THE MOVE MAY HAVE UNDER THE 1978 BILATERAL TREATY, MOSCOW HAS APPARENTLY ELECTED TO UNDERPIN WITH MILITARY FORCE A DESPOTIC REGIME WHICH CAME TO POWER 20 MONTHS AGO THROUGH A CLASSIC MILITARY COUP D'ETAT, WHOSE HUMAN  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 KABUL 08623 02 OF 02 271255Z

RIGHTS RECORD IS AMONG THE WORST IN THE WORLD, AND WHOSE "LEGITIMACY" AS THE GENUINE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE WILL OF THE AFGHAN PEOPLE CAN BE SERIOUSLY QUESTIONED, IF NOT COMPLETELY DISCARDED.

8. AFGHANISTAN'S REGIONAL NEIGHBORS ARE ALSO LIKELY TO TAKE SOME SOBERING SECOND LOOKS AT THE RAMIFICATIONS OF SOVIET ARMY FORCES SITTING IN KABUL AND SOME PROBABLY ELSEWHERE AROUND THE COUNTRY. PAKISTAN, OF COURSE, WILL PROBABLY FEEL ITSELF MOST THREATENED BY THIS DEVELOPMENT, AND SOME OF OUR PAKISTANI COLLEAGUES HERE HAVE ALREADY EXPRESSED GENUINE FEARS THAT THIS AIRLIFT IS MERELY THE INITIAL STAGE OF A LARGER SOVIET "OCCUPATION" AIMED AT DOMINANCE IN THE REGION. INDIA AS WELL MAY NOT WELCOME A MASSIVE SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE HERE, DESPITE CONSTANT DRA ASSERTIONS THAT INDIAN-AFGHAN RELATIONS RATE IN IMPORTANCE ONLY BEHIND AFGHANISTAN'S FRATERNAL RELATIONS WITH THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES. WE PRESUME THAT THE CHAOS IN IRAN WILL GREATLY DIFFUSE WHATEVER CONCERN THAT GOVERNMENT WOULD NORMALLY HAVE OVER THIS DEVELOPMENT.

9. IN SUM, NOT ONLY MAY THE SOVIET MILITARY AIRLIFT -- WHICH MAY BY NO MEANS BE OVER -- HAVE POTENTIALLY DAMAGING RAMIFICATIONS ON OUR RELATIONS WITH THE USSR AND WITH THE DRA, BUT IT ADDS ONE MORE SERIOUSLY DESTABILIZING FACTOR TO A REGION ALREADY RIFE WITH INSTABILITY AND POTENTIAL CHAOS.

10. WITHIN AFGHANISTAN, THE AIRLIFT IS LIKELY TO HAVE BOTH POLITICAL AND MILITARY GOALS. SEVERAL OF THE POINTS DISCUSSED IN OUR REFTEL REMAIN VALID IN THE WAKE OF THE AIRLIFT. THESE NEWLY ARRIVED FORCES COULD CLEARLY PROVIDE SECURITY FOR THE HUNDREDS OF SOVIET CITIZENS IN AND AROUND KABUL, ALTHOUGH THE FORCES WHICH HAVE BEEN SENT TO THE CAPITAL APPEAR EXCESSIVE TO THIS PARTICULAR ROLE. LIKEWISE, THESE UNITS NOW DEPLOYED  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 KABUL 08623 02 OF 02 271255Z

AT THE POLITICAL HEART OF THE COUNTRY COULD CONSTITUTE THE "STIFFENER" FOR THE AFGHAN ARMY IN ITS COUNTERINSURGENCY FIGHT. THE SOVIET UNITS MAY, MOREOVER, TAKE ON THE ADDED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SECURITY OF THE CAPITAL, IN ORDER TO FREE CERTAIN OF THE APPARENTLY LOYAL AND MORE HEAVILY ARMED AFGHAN

UNITS FOR ACTIVE DEPLOYMENT AGAINST THE INSURGENTS OPERATING NEAR KABUL. THE PROSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT IS MOST SOBERING IS THAT IN THE YEAR AHEAD SOVIET FORCES (ARMY AND AIRFORCE) WILL UNDERTAKE A DIRECT ROLE IN THE FIGHTING, SIDE BY SIDE WITH LOYAL DRA FORCES.

11. AT THIS POINT, POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS RATHER THAN STRICTLY MILITARY CONCERNS MAY BE AT THE ROOT OF THE SOVIET MOVE. THE MID-DECEMBER GUNFIGHT AT THE "PEOPLE'S HOUSE" IN KABUL, WHICH RESULTED IN THE PROBABLE DEATH OF ASSADULLAH AMIN (SECOND DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, A TOP PARTY OFFICIAL AND PRESIDENT HAFIZULLAH AMIN'S SON-IN-LAW) AND PERHAPS POLITBURO MEMBER ABDUL HAKIM SAHRAYEE JAUZJANI, HIGHLIGHTS THE INSTABILITY OF THE KHALQI LEADERSHIP. MOSCOW MAY, THEREFORE, HAVE DECIDED TO MOVE NOW IN ORDER TO HAVE ITS OWN FORCES ON THE SCENE IN THE EVENT THAT THE FRAGILE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP WERE TO SUDDENLY SHATTER AS A RESULT OF AN ASSASSIN'S BULLET, OR FOLLOWING ANOTHER INTRAMURAL GUNFIGHT. SINCE SOVIET ADVICE TO THE AFGHANS LAST SUMMER TO FORM A BROADER POLITICAL BASE WAS APPARENTLY IGNORED BY THE KHALQIS, THE SOVIETS MAY FEEL THAT LOCALLY AVAILABLE "MUSCLE" TO BACK UP FUTURE "ADVICE" IS MANDATORY TO PROTECT MOSCOW'S INTERESTS AND INVESTMENT IN THIS COUNTRY. AN INTEGRAL ELEMENT HERE, OF COURSE, IS THE FLEXIBILITY THE SOVIET FORCES PROVIDE TO MOSCOW SHOULD THE AFGHAN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP SPLIT INTO CONTENDING FACTIONS, OR SHOULD SOME AFGHAN MILITARY CONTINGENT ATTEMPT TO REPLACE THE KHALQIS. IN THE BIGGER PICTURE, THE SOVIET MOVE UNDERSCORES MOSCOW'S COMMITMENT TO THE REVOLUTION, A COMMITMENT THE SOVIETS MAY HAVE WANTED TO HIGHLIGHT FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHER FRATERNAL PARTIES AND REGIMES.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 KABUL 08623 02 OF 02 271255Z

12. AFGHAN INDEPENDENCE NOW VIRTUALLY NON-EXISTENT. AS POINTED OUT IN OUR REFTTEL, THE ARRIVAL OF A FEW SOVIET BATTALIONS AT BAGRAM AIR BASE CAST FURTHER DOUBT ON AFGHANISTAN'S ABILITY TO PURSUE ANY INDEPENDENT COURSE ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. IN OUR VIEW, THE AIRLIFT VIRTUALLY ELIMINATES ANY QUESTION ON THIS ISSUE. HAFIZULLAH AMIN HAS APPARENTLY ELECTED TO PLACE THE SECURITY OF HIS REVOLUTION IN MOSCOW'S HANDS FOR THE SAKE OF RETAINING HIS POWER. GIVEN THE CURRENT FORCES AT WORK ON AFGHANISTAN'S POLITICAL SCENE, IT COULD BE YEARS BEFORE A COMMUNIST REGIME IS SUFFICIENTLY SECURE THAT A SOVIET WITHDRAWAL WOULD BE FEASIBLE.

13. LOCAL REACTION TO THE AIRLIFT -- AND WHAT MAY FOLLOW -- HAS BEEN MOSTLY DESPAIR. THOSE FEW AFGHANS WHO HAVE BEEN WILLING TO VOICE THEIR REACTIONS TO THESE EVENTS (A RISKY STEP THESE DAYS) HAVE GENERALLY DESPAIRED AT WHAT THE AIRLIFT PORTENDS FOR THEIR COUNTRY. MOST BELIEVE THAT THE ARRIVAL OF

SOVIET COMBAT FORCES MEANS THERE IS NOW LITTLE, IF ANY, CHANCE  
OF UNSEATING THE KHALQIS, AND THAT AMIN AND HIS FOLLOWERS WILL  
NOW EMBARK ON AN EVEN MORE REPRESSIVE POLICY OF STAMPING  
OUT ALL PERCEIVED OPPOSITION. A KABUL FLOWER VENDOR WAS  
NOT ALL THAT WIDE OF THE MARK WHEN HE REMARKED SADLY TO AN  
EMBASSY OFFICER YESTERDAY THAT "AFGHANISTAN HAS NOW BECOME A  
SECOND CZECHOSLOVAKIA." AMSTUTZ

SECRET

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** TROOP DEPLOYMENT, ARMED FORCES, COLLECTIVE SECURITY, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, MILITARY AIRLIFTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 27 dec 1979  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1979KABUL08623  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS 19851227 TAYLOR, JAMES E  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D790595-0307  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** KABUL OR-P  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1979/newtext/t19791215/aaaaalod.tel  
**Line Count:** 285  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** 9090e002-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** SECRET  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 6  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** SECRET  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 79 KABUL 8566  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 27 jan 2006  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 218057  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** (LOU) SOVIET AIRLIFT COULD HAVE REPERCUSSIONS BEYOND AFGHAN BORDERS  
**TAGS:** PEPR, PGOV, PINS, US, AF, UR  
**To:** STATE ANKARA  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/9090e002-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014